

## Linguicism: The Anglicisation of Catholic Worship in the Archdiocese of Lagos

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### Abstract

*Language has always been known to be central to religious worship to the point that particular religions tend to hold on to particular languages as sacred or official. This study, using data from a questionnaire administered on Catholics selected from seven out of the fifteen deaneries in the Archdiocese of Lagos, Nigeria, investigates the dominant linguistic pattern of Catholic liturgy in the archdiocese. It reveals a case of unconscious linguicism resulting in a tendency towards monolingualism and the domination of English over Latin (the language of liturgy and of most sacred and official documents of the Church) and indigenous Nigerian languages. By extension, the study traces the root of the threatening extinction of the mother tongue to the place of worship, taking into cognizance the contributions of the home and school.*

**Keywords:** *Linguicism, Liturgy, Latin, Vernacular, Lagos Archdiocese*

### Introduction

Language is central to every form of religion as it is often the channel through which mortals communicate with the Supreme Being. In Catholicism (a term which refers to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church – one of the largest and earliest forms of Christianity), the question of language and its relevance in ensuring the faithful's consciousness and participation in liturgy has led to occasional modifications by the Church's ecumenical council. Till date, the Roman Catholic Church is noted for her adoption of Latin for liturgical and other purposes. Actually, Latin is the official language of the Roman Catholic Church (Sullivan, 1919:117). It is taught in

seminaries, being the language which unites the entire Church all around the globe (note that the term 'Church', throughout this article, refers to the Catholic Church while 'church' is used in the generic sense).

Among other things, the need for an official language for the Church can be seen in her acclaimed universality. Hence, armed with Latin, any priest can say mass in almost any church in the whole world. We may also ask: Why Latin? Sullivan (1919:120) explains:

We can readily understand that it is of utmost importance that the dogmas of religion should be defined with great exactness, in a language that always conveys the same ideas. Latin is now what we call a 'dead language' – that is, not being in daily use as a spoken tongue, it does not vary in meaning.

The linguistic situation in the Catholic Church could thus be summarised as follows:

- Latin is the official language, the language of liturgy and of most sacred and official documents emanating from the Church all over the world. It preserves the tradition and rites of the Church.
- The vernacular (the common language spoken by average citizens of a place) is used in Masses and other liturgical celebrations to ensure that all the faithful are led to full, conscious and active participation. This modernisation in the practices of the Church was a major outcome of the Second Vatican Council held in the early 1960s. It was based on the recognition of the potential for the promotion of better understanding of the liturgy, which lies in the mother tongue.
- English, being a modern language, is also one of the languages in which Catholic rites are performed. This is to facilitate the ability of the Church to communicate her relevance and beliefs clearly in today's modern world.

The Catholic Church in Nigeria, being part of the universal Church under the spiritual leadership of the Pope, is bound by every reform initiated by the Vatican Council and, as such, had to adopt the Latin

Rite translated to English and, subsequently, to indigenous Nigerian languages. Given that the idea of a vernacular presupposes the common language spoken by average citizens of a place, one begins to wonder what the vernacular in the individual deaneries would be, considering the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos. This study therefore investigates the language of Catholic worship in the Archdiocese of Lagos with a view to establishing the actual place of Latin, English and indigenous Nigerian languages.

### **The Linguistic Situation in Lagos, Nigeria**

Lagos has been variously described as “a pot-pourri of different peoples and tribes” (Adedun and Shodipe, 2011b), “a melting pot of Africans and Europeans” (Ade Ajayi, 1998:286) and a cosmopolitan city. These are different ways of capturing the inherent heterogeneity of the Lagos population which has unarguably had noticeable impacts on the linguistic character of the state. Lagos is primarily located in the South-Western part of Nigeria. By implication, it is predominantly Yoruba-speaking. However, due to heavy migration from other parts of Nigeria, virtually all ethnicities are well represented in the state. Interestingly, Myers-Scotton (1988, 1990) observes that ‘not less than 85 percent’ of the non-Yoruba population in Lagos speak Yoruba. This however does not in any way make Lagos a monolingual speech community as, alongside Yoruba, other Nigerian languages are freely used by people of different ethno-linguistic groups which include Igbo, Efik, Hausa, Edo, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Egun and Tiv. Agboola (1997) observes that, although there is no such thing as complete ethnic segregation in Lagos, the Yoruba are more concentrated in Lagos Island and Ebute Metta; the Urhobo in Ereko, the Efik in Araromi and Ojuelegba, and Edo in Epetedo and Ita Faji. Igbo-dominated areas include Amuwo-Odofin, Ojo, Ajeromi-Ifelodun and Surulere. By implication, the language of the dominant group in each area constitutes the vernacular.

A description of the linguistic situation in Lagos will not be complete without a mention of the dominant role played by English, as an official language, and Nigerian Pidgin, as the language of wider communication. The functions of these two languages, in the broad sense mentioned above, cuts across all states of the federation, Nigeria. Lagos, being a socio-cultural melting pot, however, also attracts both Nigerians and foreigners alike. Consequently, the presence of pockets

of foreigners including Americans, Britons, Chinese, Lebanese, South Africans, East Indians, white Zimbabweans, Greeks, Syrians and Japanese, particularly in the Ikoyi and Victoria Island axes, each of who freely use their languages in their small communities, must also be mentioned. Of no less importance are other migrants from surrounding countries. Thus, while Lagos can rightly be regarded as a microcosm of the Nigerian society, these melting pot and potpourri features are strikingly peculiar to it and greatly impact on its linguistic character.

### **Language and Religion**

Religion represents ways through which the human race yearns for the divine or spiritual. Oftentimes, this yearning is embodied in words accepted by the community of people involved, thereby forming a basis for the concerned religion. Mukherjee (2013) notes that two fundamental realities make the study of language and religion inseparable: the first of these is the importance of language to religion and the second is the fact that both language and religion are “markers of identity” that evolve and change according to the needs of society. Listing the ten language functions, Stewart (1968: 541) mentions the religious function of language i.e. “the use of language primarily in connection with the ritual of a particular religion”. Thus, language serves as the major and most powerful instrument through which a people express their religion, religious beliefs and ideas. By implication, it is one of the most important elements of a good and faith-filled religious celebration. Arinze (2006) notes:

It is a remarkable phenomenon that many religions of the world, or major branches of them, hold on to a language as dear to them. We cannot think of the Jewish religion without Hebrew. Islam holds Arabic as sacred to the Qur'an. Classical Hinduism considers Sanskrit its official language. Buddhism has its sacred texts in Pali.

Such affiliations are passed down from generation to generation. That religion exists largely in language is obvious in the overwhelming significance of sacred languages and holy books. It is taken for granted, for instance, that every Jew knows how to pray in Hebrew even when they do not speak, or largely understand, the language. Same goes for Islam where every Muslim knows how to pray in Arabic, again, even

with little competence in the language. Hebrew, which is only specific to Israel, and Arabic, which is also only specific to Arabia, thus acquire the status of 'religious languages' in these contexts where they are "especially reserved for religious activities and used for very little else, except perhaps as school subjects or literary and scholarly languages" (Fasold, 1987: 77-78). Thus, the language of prayer in a particular religion could be different from the language spoken outside the place of worship in that same religion. Addressing the question of 'religious language', Samarin (1987: 85) suggests that a religious language is a language that is "consistently used with religion" or within a religious domain of language use. In other words, it is a language which enables the learner, the writer or the scholar to participate in religious custom with or without a significant level of competence in it.

### **The Language of Christianity in Lagos, Nigeria**

The Christian religion today stands as one of the significant evidences of the country's colonial experience. Among the first missionaries to set foot on the Nigerian soil were those of the Wesleyan Mission, the Methodist Mission, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Mission and the CMS Mission. The activities of these missionaries, particularly as regards English education, promoted the use of English for religious and other activities. According to Oshitelu (2007:4),

the Roman Catholic Church used ancient and foreign languages such as Latin in conducting important mass, while the Anglican made use of prayer book, which had no meaning and immediate relevance to African needs and conditions.

Awonusi (2004) however notes that the CMS Mission, along the line, resorted to a change of policy which saw them emphasizing vernacular education and eventually translating the Bible to Nigerian languages, including Yoruba (Crowther, 1900) and Igbo. This promoted the use of the vernacular in worship and the development of the orthography of indigenous Nigerian languages. The adoption of the vernacular in Catholic liturgy by the Second Vatican Council equally expanded the linguistic base of the Catholic faithful, making it possible for Catholic rites and liturgy to also be translated to Nigerian indigenous languages.

While the language of worship in these mainline churches (Catholic, Anglican, etc.) continued to be influenced directly or indirectly by their western origin, the emergence of African indigenous Churches (viz Pentecostal and White Garment) served as a turning point in the religio-linguistic choices of the Nigerian Christian. These new churches Africanized the Christian worship with the instrument and use of African languages. Alabi (2015) notes:

When the Africans started their own churches, native language was encouraged. This met the needs, aspirations, religious quests, desires and prayers of people with African manner of worship... The beauty of African languages was brought to foreplay in prayers, songs, music and praise chants to God Almighty which foreign language idioms do not have. The sonorous voices of the reciters of praise chants to God during thanksgiving brought out the beauty of African songs and music during worship which could be foreign to Westerners and their culture which has no room for such.

Thus, despite the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos, it is the case that The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) founded by Rev. Akindayomi, Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM) founded by Dr. Olukoya, Deeper Christian Life Ministry (founded by William Kumuyi), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) founded by Ayo Babalola, Cherubim and Seraphim (C & S) founded by Orimolade Tunolase, and a host of others, do observe their liturgies in Yoruba. Thus, while the use of the indigenous language has led to the growth of African Christianity in Lagos State, same cannot be said of the mainline churches who have strongly held on to Western cultures (language inclusive) and values as handed down to them by their colonial mother churches.

### **Latin in Catholic Worship**

In the first century, Hebrew, Greek and Latin were employed predominantly, if not exclusively, in the liturgical service of the Catholic Church (McKenzie, 1953:548) being the three principal languages in which the inscription on the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," was written (John 19:19, 20). However, over the

years, Latin has dominated the sacred language scene in the Catholic Church and a number of reasons have been advanced for this. These include its mysterious and unchanging nature (being a dead language), its ability to bring about unity among Catholics, its precise, noble and beautiful structure and the fact that it is not associated with a specific nation or people. It could actually be argued that since the Catholic Church is bigger than any nation, it needed to adopt a language that does not belong to any nationality. Arinze (2006) further explains:

The Popes and the Roman Church have found Latin very suitable for many reasons. It fits a Church which is universal, a Church in which all peoples, languages and cultures should feel at home and no one is regarded as a stranger...Latin has the characteristic of words and expressions retaining their meaning generation after generation. This is an advantage when it comes to the articulation of our Catholic faith and the preparation of Papal and other Church documents. Even the modern universities appreciate this point and have some of their solemn titles in Latin.

Little wonder then that even the Second Vatican Council, although it admitted some introduction of the indigenous language, insisted on the place of Latin. Article 36 of the constitution of the Vatican Council states: "Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites" (SC, n. 36); while Article 54 requests that steps be taken "enabling the faithful to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass belonging to them". Therefore, to ensure the perpetuation of the use of Latin in the Church, the language is compulsorily taught in seminaries. Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Sacramentum caritatis* (2007:62) urges priests as follows:

I ask that future priests, from their time in the seminary, receive the preparation needed to understand and to celebrate Mass in Latin, and also to use Latin texts and execute Gregorian chant; nor should we forget that the faithful can be taught to recite the more common prayers in Latin, and also to sing parts of the liturgy to Gregorian chant.

This injunction must have been taken seriously in the Church in Nigeria since, according to Obiefuna and Ezeoba (2010),

In the Catholic Church in Nigeria, ... Latin language is still regarded as superior language for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist even when most or almost all the Catholic churches in the west no longer use Latin language for the celebration of the Eucharist, and even when not up to 5% of the congregation in the Nigerian church understand the meaning of the Latin language.

This claim of strict adherence (in Nigeria) to the Papal injunction on the perpetuation of Latin in the Catholic Church is part of what this study sets out to investigate using Lagos, the greatest melting pot and cosmopolitan city in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinged on the framework of Linguicism, a term used to describe the domination of one language at the expense of others. This term, coined by linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas in the 1980s has been used to describe the different cases of discrimination based on language or dialect i.e. linguistically-argued racism. According to her, Linguicism refers to:

ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (1988: 13).

Phillipson (1992:47), in his theory of Linguicism which identifies linguistic imperialism as a manifestation of linguicism, emphasizes that “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages”. ‘Structural’ here is related to material properties such as institutions and financial allocations while ‘cultural’ is related to immaterial or ideological properties such as language attitudes, or pedagogical principles. Linguicism thus comprises a depiction of the dominant language (to



which attractive characteristics are endorsed) for function of inclusion, and the reverse for subjugated languages (for rationalizing exclusion).

Precisely put, linguicism can be linked to “pressure towards monolingualism and towards a denial of the reality that multilingualism is a global norm” (Kamwangamalu, 2016:73). In other words, it permits the dominance of certain groups or classes and their languages over others, possibly leading to the extinction of the latter. Skutnabb-Kangas (1985:13) expatiates:

Linguicism can be *open* (the agent does not try to hide it), *conscious* (the agent is aware of it), *visible* (it is easy for non-agents to detect), and *actively action-oriented* (as opposed to 'merely' attitudinal). Or it can be *hidden*, *unconscious*, *invisible*, and *passive* (lack of support rather than active opposition), typical of later phases in the development of minority education.

The situation investigated in this study represents unconscious linguicism, being that the dominance of English over Latin and the indigenous language in Catholic liturgy has been a function of lack of support rather than active opposition. It is rather paradoxical in the sense that it is a case of a people gradually but consistently working towards the death of their mother tongue.

Obondo (2007) opines that Linguicism operates in such a way that “those who are excluded from access are prevented from appreciating and realizing the full potentialities of the indigenous languages”. This, if unchecked, could lead to language endangerment, loss and/or extinction. Suffice it to note that a language is said to be endangered when there is a drop in the usage of its original form to the advantage of a rival language.

A language only exists through the use that people make of it with one another. In other words, a language ‘dies’ when the people who speak it simply stop doing so. This is however described not as language death but as a process of language abandonment. One factor that leads to language abandonment is consistent exposure to situations where another language is preferred. David Crystal (2000:154) states emphatically that ‘only a community can save an endangered language.’ It is improbable that the confrontation with English, or with any other world language, is the main factor in the disappearance of

minor languages. Using the framework of Linguicism, therefore, this study reviews the imbalance in the use of English, Latin and the vernacular in Catholic liturgy in the Archdiocese of Lagos.

### **Research Procedure**

The study was carried out in the Lagos Archdiocese of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Fifteen deaneries - Agege, Apapa, Badagry, Epe, Festac, Ikeja, Ikorodu, Ipaja, Isolo, Lagos Island, Lekki, Maryland, Satellite, Surulere and Yaba- make up the archdiocese with varying numbers of parishes in each deanery. For instance, while Ikorodu has only eight, Isolo has fifteen. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed to elicit information not only on Latin, English and vernacular mass schedules in the different parishes but also on the attitudes of the Catholic faithful in Lagos towards the use of each of these languages in liturgical celebrations.

In this phase of the study which is a pilot of the main study, only seven deaneries were sampled. These include Badagry, Ikeja, Ikorodu, Isolo, Maryland, Surulere and Yaba. These deaneries and the parishes in them thus constitute the study population. Using the random sampling technique, one hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed across these seven deaneries while a total of one hundred and twenty duly filled and returned copies constituted the data for the study. Relevant variables include the age, sex, linguistic background and location of the respondents; each of which had some impact on their responses.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections: Section A was designed to elicit demographic information on the respondents, such as age, linguistic background, parish and deanery; and the mass schedules in their parishes/deaneries. Sections B, C and D sought specific details on the attitudes towards Latin, English and vernacular masses respectively in the respondents' parishes. These sections consist of statements which represent possible positions on the use of these languages for liturgical purposes. The responses to these statements were designed on a 5-point Likert scale to avoid a central tendency. The scale ranks from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) with Agree (A), Neutral (N) and Disagree (D) intervening. Section E is an unstructured section which allows the respondents to freely express their views on the future of Catholic liturgy in Latin, English and the vernacular in the archdiocese. The

analysis, which is both qualitative and quantitative, shows varied opinions on the status of these codes in the Church's worship.

#### **Data Presentation**

A major variable which accounted for the responses we received from our respondents was age. The analysis of the ages of the respondents revealed that 13% were below the age of thirty. 41% were aged between thirty and fifty while 21% were aged fifty and above. 25% were null as the respondents chose to be silent on their ages. The table below presents the age distribution of the sample:

**Table 1: Age Distribution of the Sample**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Below 30</b>	16	13
<b>30-50</b>	49	41
<b>50 and above</b>	25	21
<b>Null Responses</b>	30	25
<b>Total</b>	120	100%

Our analysis of Section A of the questionnaire which focused on the mass schedules shows the existence of daily (D), weekly (W), monthly (M) or no schedule at all (N) in the different languages. Table 2 below is a representation of the dominant mass schedules in the deaneries. The table shows that English masses are said in all the deaneries on a daily basis. However, while Latin masses are either said monthly (as in Ikeja, Ikorodu, Maryland, Surulere and Yaba) or weekly (as in Badagry) – although the parishes in Isolo deanery vary on this account - no deanery recorded 100% affirmation on the issue of indigenous language mass schedules. Whereas Ikorodu, Isolo and Maryland had a 0% record of indigenous language mass schedules, other deaneries were not so homogenous in their responses. Parishes in Badagry and Surulere either had masses in an indigenous language on a weekly basis or had none at all while for Ikeja and Yaba, such masses either did not exist or were scheduled on a monthly basis.

**Table 2: Mass Schedules in Latin, English and the vernacular**

Deanery	Languages in Use		
	Latin	Vernacular	English
Badagry	W	W/N	D
Ikeja	M	M/N	D
Ikorodu	M	N	D
Isolo	M/W	N	D
Maryland	M	N	D
Surulere	M	W/N	D
Yaba	M	M/N	D

Section B of the questionnaire focused on Latin masses and the Catholic faithful's attitude towards them. While a majority of the respondents agreed that they look forward to Latin masses, they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that the youth participate actively during Latin masses. The statement that priests fluently render all parts of the mass in Latin was also not supported by the respondents. However, 50% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that Latin masses are enjoyed only by the older generation while 58% also agreed that the zeal to learn the responses and chants used in Latin masses by heart is high among the faithful. The statement that all parts of the mass are sung and rendered in Latin during Latin masses was met with strong disagreement (54%) although the respondents agreed that Latin masses are always well-attended and lively.

63% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that Latin texts and chants are incomprehensible to many yet 71% agreed that Latin masses accentuate the universal nature of the church. 46% were in agreement with the statement that new generation priests are not very enthusiastic about Latin. 62% of the respondents could not hide their (strong) disagreement with the last statement in this section which suggests that Latin masses are generally preferred to English masses. Table 3 below presents the frequency distribution of the responses on Latin masses.

**Table 3: Attitude towards Latin Masses**

S/ No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Void	Total
1.	The faithful generally look forward to Latin masses.	16/ 13%	50/ 42%	25/ 21%	24/ 20%	-	5/ 4%	120/ 100%
2.	The youth participate actively during Latin masses.	-	35/ 29%	55/ 46%	30/ 25%	-	-	120/ 100%
3.	Priests fluently render all parts of the mass in Latin.	10/ 8%	30/ 25%	20/ 17%	50/ 42%	-	10/ 8%	120/ 100%
4.	Latin masses are enjoyed only by the older generation.	35/ 29%	25/ 21%	35/ 29%	20/ 17%	5/ 4%	-	120/ 100%
5.	The zeal to learn the responses and chants used in Latin masses by heart is high among the faithful.	25/ 21%	45/ 37%	25/ 21%	25/ 21%	-	-	120/ 100%
6.	All parts of the mass are sung and rendered in Latin during Latin masses.	20/ 17%	35/ 29%	-	46/ 38%	19/ 16%	-	120/ 100%
7.	Latin masses are always well-attended and lively.	15/ 13%	30/ 25%	40/ 33%	30/ 25%	5/ 4%	-	120/ 100%
8.	Latin texts and chants are incomprehensible to many.	15/ 13%	60/ 50%	25/ 21%	16/ 13%	-	4/ 3%	120/ 100%
9.	Latin masses accentuate the universal nature of the church.	55/ 46%	30/ 25%	20/ 17%	-	-	15/ 12%	120/ 100%
10.	New generation priests are not very enthusiastic about Latin.	10/ 8%	46/ 38%	20/ 17%	30/ 25%	14/ 12%	-	120/ 100%
11.	Latin masses are generally preferred to English masses.	5/ 4%	16/ 13%	25/ 21%	55/ 46%	19/ 16%	-	120/ 100%

Section C of the questionnaire sought to access the faithful's attitude towards English masses. The responses showed that virtually all the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that English masses are enjoyed by all and are actively participated in. An overwhelming majority also agreed with the statements that the texts of English masses are comprehensible to all and English masses unite the faithful from all language backgrounds, although 50% were neutral on the claim that both priests and the laity prefer to have their masses in English. Over 50% of the respondents (strongly) agree that English translations of Latin texts in the mass reflect the original meaning and English masses are better attended than both Latin and vernacular masses. 67% however feel that concentrating on English masses can affect the universal nature of the church.

Majority also (strongly) agreed that English masses allow better understanding of the liturgy although concentrating on English masses could lead to the 'death' of Latin in the Church. The disagreement with the statement that English is the language of the modern times and should dominate the mass slightly outweighs the agreement (41% against 38%) with an intervening 21% neutral responses. However, a whopping 59% either agreed or strongly agreed

that English masses threaten the survival of the vernacular. Table 4 below captures the responses on English masses.

**Table 4: Attitude towards English Masses**

S/No.	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SD	Void	Total
1.	English masses are enjoyed by all and are actively participated in.	90/ 75%	30/ 25%	-	-	-	-	120/ 100%
2.	The texts of English masses are comprehensible to all.	80/ 67%	35/ 29%	5/ 4%	-	-	-	120/ 100%
3.	Both priests and the laity prefer to have their masses in English.	35/ 29%	25/ 21%	60/ 50%	-	-	-	120/ 100%
4.	English translations of Latin texts in the mass reflect the original meaning.	25/ 21%	45/ 38%	40/ 33%	10/ 8%	-	-	120/ 100%
5.	English masses are better attended than both Latin and vernacular masses.	45/ 38%	30/ 25%	25/ 21%	10/ 8%	10/ 8%	-	120/ 100%
6.	English masses unite the faithful from all language backgrounds.	70/ 58%	40/ 33%	9/ 8%	-	-	1/ 1%	120/ 100%
7.	Concentrating on English masses can affect the universal nature of the church.	30/ 25%	50/ 42%	30/ 25%	10/ 8%	-	-	120/ 100%
8.	English masses allow better understanding of the liturgy.	45/ 38%	70/ 58%	5/ 4%	-	-	-	120/ 100%
9.	English is the language of the modern times and should dominate the mass.	25/ 21%	20/ 17%	25/ 21%	46/ 38%	4/ 3%	-	120/ 100%
10.	Concentrating on English masses could lead to the 'death' of Latin.	55/ 46%	35/ 29%	16/ 13%	14/ 12%	-	-	120/ 100%
11.	English masses threaten the survival of the vernacular.	25/ 21%	46/ 38%	30/ 25%	19/ 16%	-	-	120/ 100%

The statements in section D were designed to elicit information on the respondents' attitude towards the use of the indigenous languages in Catholic worship. Given that a good number of them were from parishes where vernacular masses were non-existent, a significant number of void responses which did not exist in the earlier sections were recorded. 33%, as against 29% (neutral responses), agreed that only the older generation enjoy and participate actively in vernacular masses while a 42% majority disagreed with the statements that masses are said in Yoruba and other indigenous Nigerian languages and the faithful generally look forward to them. The statement that the faithful always require translated order of the mass to participate actively attracted a 38% majority neutral response.

Whereas a whopping 55% agreed or strongly agreed that only a few priests can fluently celebrate mass in the vernacular, not even one respondent agreed that vernacular masses are generally preferred to English masses. Half of the respondents however agreed that the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos does not allow vibrant vernacular masses. 46% disagreed with the suggestion that Masses should be

celebrated more often in the vernacular. 55% did not also agree with the claim that translation of Latin texts to vernacular undermines the sanctity of the liturgy. In the final analysis, while 46% agreed that insistence on Vernacular masses will guarantee the continued existence of our local languages, not even one respondent agreed with the suggestion that vernacular masses should be banned in Lagos churches. Table 5 below captures the attitude towards vernacular masses.

**Table 5: Attitude towards Vernacular Masses**

S/N o.	STATEMENT	SA	A	N	D	SD	Void	Total
1.	Only the older generation enjoy and participate actively in vernacular masses.	5/ 4%	35/ 29%	35/ 29%	16/ 13%	16/ 13%	13/ 11%	120/ 100%
2.	We have masses in Yoruba and other indigenous Nigerian languages.	10/ 8%	35/ 29%	5/ 4%	25/ 21%	25/ 21%	20/ 17%	120/ 100%
3.	The faithful generally look forward to vernacular masses.	-	16/ 13%	39/ 33%	35/ 29%	16/ 13%	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
4.	The faithful always require translated order of the mass to participate actively.	10/ 8%	20/ 17%	46/ 38%	30/ 25%	-	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
5.	Vernacular masses are generally preferred to English masses.	-	-	50/ 42%	40/ 33%	16/ 13%	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
6.	Only a few priests can fluently celebrate mass in the vernacular.	20/ 17%	46/ 38%	24/ 20%	16/ 13%	-	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
7.	The cosmopolitan nature of Lagos does not allow vibrant vernacular masses.	20/ 17%	40/ 33%	16/ 13%	20/ 17%	-	24/ 20%	120/ 100%
8.	Masses should be celebrated more often in the vernacular.	5/ 4%	16/ 13%	30/ 25%	39/ 33%	16/ 13%	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
9.	Translation of Latin texts to vernacular undermines the sanctity of the liturgy.	5/ 4%	16/ 13%	19/ 16%	50/ 42%	16/ 13%	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
10.	Vernacular masses should be banned in Lagos churches.	-	-	46/ 38%	20/ 17%	40/ 33%	14/ 12%	120/ 100%
11.	Insistence on Vernacular masses will guarantee the continued existence of our local languages.	20/ 17%	35/ 29%	25/ 21%	16/ 13%	10/ 8%	14/ 12%	120/ 100%

Responses in Section E, the unstructured section, were analysed qualitatively. Here, respondents freely expressed their views on the future of Catholic liturgy in Latin, English and the vernacular in the archdiocese. For ease of analysis, the responses have been grouped into three:

1. Latin should be further entrenched in the Church's liturgy in the archdiocese. It enhances the sacred rites and traditions of

the Church globally, particularly as regards the Easter Paschal triduum rituals and other symbolic periods in the Church calendar. Latin should be sustained in the archdiocese as it is reminiscent of the uniqueness of the mother Church, rendering her liturgy mysterious, reverent and transcendent.

2. Latin has outstayed its usefulness in the Church. It is no longer taught in schools; consequently, the faithful can only guess the meaning of what they recite with recourse to the English versions with which they are conversant. Not even priests fancy it anymore as it alienates the worshipper from a meaningful communication with his/her God.
3. Church liturgy should be conducted in a language understood by the participants. In Lagos, English is the most qualified language for this since it is accessible to both native Lagosians and non-Lagosians alike; with the latter outnumbering the former.

Our analysis revealed that the first opinion was that of mainly respondents within the age bracket of 50 and above. Further analysis showed that these are people who were raised in the Church at a point when Latin was in full force as the language of the Church. They are, so to say, attached to Latin in the liturgy and have watched helplessly as the language ‘dies’. These are the prominent voices heard during the Gregorian chants, the *Credo*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, *Pater Nostra*, *Agnus Dei* and the many responses that mark the Ordinary of the Mass. Their position on the linguistic future of Catholic liturgy in the archdiocese can be said to be born of their nostalgia for the Pre-Vatican II days during which Latin was the language of liturgy.

The second opinion dominated the youth’s responses. This group felt that Latin alienates them from participating in the liturgy since the wordings are at best incomprehensible. Their position was further strengthened by the fact that they also had no way of learning the language, an indicator that it should be phased out. Their response mildly pointed to the fact that the laity was not alone in the anti-Latin protest, hence the claim that ‘not even priests fancy it anymore’. Underlying their position is the belief that the Church’s Latin liturgy is stereotyped, boring and repetitive.

The third group can best be described as radical and they cut across all the age groups with the majority coming from those below 30. This group appreciates the communicative nature of religious



activities and would rather have them conducted in a language they can understand. They also tend to believe that since God understands all languages, they will be more comfortable communicating with Him in a language in which they are equally competent. Their position is thus born of the desire to meaningfully commune with their creator without any barrier and, for them, only English can make this happen.

### **Discussion of Findings and Recommendations**

The data presented and analysed above reveals that language use in Catholic liturgy in Lagos tilts towards monolingualism in favour of English. This trend was made possible by the fact that there is no uniform policy, as revealed in the data, on the language of liturgy across the parishes and deaneries in the archdiocese. Hence, individual parishes adopt whatever schedule they consider convenient. Since multilingualism is a global norm, the situation is considered worrisome particularly considering the threat which it constitutes for the indigenous languages. A look at the situation vis-à-vis the linguistic situation in the immediate Lagos environment further reveals that the situation in the church is a reflection of the society. For instance, English is spoken in most homes. It is also used exclusively in most schools (even to facilitate the teaching of Nigerian languages) and this greatly affects the proficiency level of even those who speak these languages.

Adedun and Shodiye (2011a) already observed that speakers of indigenous languages in Nigeria are linguistically disadvantaged in terms of social value and international significance because aspects of indigenous culture which reside in the mother tongue are being daily eviscerated in the face of overwhelming preference for English. Such a scenario does not in any way augur well for the promotion of the vernacular. It actually has serious implications for the future of indigenous languages in Nigeria as evidenced in the dwindling interest in the learning and use of the languages.

One can also compare the population of candidates who apply for and are admitted to study English annually in Nigeria to those who indicate interest in Nigerian languages. In other words, Nigerians, and not just the Catholic faith, suffer the same fate of Anglicisation. Ironically, though, vernacularisation has helped the growth of smaller churches in Lagos; it, therefore, remains a source of worry that same cannot be said of the use of vernacular in the Catholic Church. We

may, however, ascribe this to her Western origin and also the liturgical nature of her rites and traditions.

Another major finding is that majority of the respondents who are pro-Latin belong to the older generation. This can be ascribed to the fact that in the early days of the Roman Catholic Mission in Nigeria, the sacredness of the language was emphasised and Latin was taught in schools. Subsequently, the vast majority of *educated* persons in the country were basically familiar with Latin which also doubled as a language of science, medicine and law. Because of its prestige, the motivation to learn and use the language even beyond the Church was high. Today, although Latin still features prominently in law register, for instance, the motivation to learn it keeps dwindling. One then begins to wonder if the current situation is not an indication that Latin is losing ground.

The possibility of sustaining a language in a liturgy where it is unintelligible to majority of the congregation, however, remains in doubt. With Latin being practically used today only by the Catholic hierarchy, it is in doubt if it really has a future even in the Church itself. We therefore make the following recommendations as a way of checking the domination of the Catholic liturgy by English:

- From the outcome of this study, it is recommended that there be established a distinct language policy for churches which will take into consideration the preservation of the mother tongue. One factor to be taken into consideration in such a policy is the identification of the dominant group in each locality and provision for masses to be celebrated in the language of that group in addition to the normal English schedules at agreed times.
- Since Latin as a lingua franca of the Church enables Catholics to communicate easily with the Holy See and with one another, conscious attempts should also be made at the archdiocesan level and, indeed, nationally, to ensure that parishes celebrate masses in Latin at least once in a month. The younger generation need to be thought to appreciate the universal nature of the church which is being threatened by the current relegation of Latin to the background. Since Latin enables present-day Catholics to read the writings of the Fathers and magisterial texts of previous ages, it unarguably

links the church of the present day with the early church, and also with the church of the future.

### **Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

Our analysis of the data in this study revealed a trend in which the liturgy has been generally anglicised owing to the allocation of more days and occasions to English masses as against Latin and vernacular masses. In addition, it was observed that the positions of our respondents on the subject of discussion were generally influenced by their age. Thus, while the older generation openly craved for Latin and (though insignificantly) vernacular, the younger generation were generally satisfied with English, the most powerful language of their generation, as language of worship. The implication of this is that, age is very crucial in the choice of a preferred language of worship. Sadly, but truly, our data analysis also revealed that the vernacular is endangered since neither the older nor the younger generation admitted any strong preference for it. Considering the fact that each language is significant in its own way, it is our humble opinion in this study that the Church should consciously guard against the threatening extinction and loss of the mother tongue and Latin by ensuring that they remain relevant alongside the dominant English.

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